

REMARKS

The Applicants thank the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application.

Claims 3, 7-9, 23, 25, 28, and 29 are pending. Claims 4, 6, 10, 21, 22, 24, 26, and 27 are cancelled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein. Claims 1, 2, 5, 11-20 were previously cancelled. Claim 23 is amended. Claims 23 and 25 are independent. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein.

Reasons for Entry of Amendments

At the outset, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered into the Official File in view of the fact that the amendments to the claims automatically place the application in condition for allowance.

In the alternative, if the Examiner does not agree that this application is in condition for allowance, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered for the purpose of appeal. This Amendment

- reduces the issues on appeal by placing the claims in compliance with 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, by canceling rejected claims 26 and 27;
- incorporates the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 21 into independent claim 23, and
- cancels claims 4, 6, 10, 21, 22, and 24 which were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

All pending claims are now in condition for allowance.

This Amendment was not presented at an earlier date in view of the fact that Applicants did not fully appreciate the Examiner's position until the Final Office Action was reviewed.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner states that:

Claims 25, 28, and 29 are allowed; and

claim 21 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including

The Applicants appreciate the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter. As indicated below, independent claim 23 has been amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 21.

Therefore, the Applicants believe that independent claim 23 and claims 3, and 7-9 depending therefrom are in condition for allowance.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph

In response to the objection to claims 26 and 27, claims 26 and 27 have been cancelled. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph are respectfully requested.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 23, 26, 3, and 6-10 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Wright (U.S. 2,782,862) in view of Mendham (U.S. 5,269,057) and Huet (U.S. 3,729,155) or Janicke et al. (U.S. 4,081,652);

claim 9 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Wright in view of Mendham and Huet or Janicke et al., and further in view of Camping et al. (U.S. 2,698,666);

claims 24, 27, and 4 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Camping et al. (U.S. 2,698,666) or Liedholm (U.S. 2,615,520) and Mendham and Huet or Janicke et al.; and

claim 22 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Platt et al. (U.S. 412, 908) and Mendham and Huet or Janicke et al.

These rejections are respectfully traversed.

As indicated above, independent claim 23 has been amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 21.

Dependent claims 6, 10, and 26, previously depending from independent claim 23 have been cancelled. Dependent claims 3 and 7-9 remain pending and dependent from independent claim 23.

Therefore, independent claim 23 and dependent claims 3 and 7-9 are in condition for allowance.

In addition, the Examiner will note that while not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejections, independent claims 22 and 24, and dependent claims 4 and 27 also have been cancelled.

In view of the above all pending claims are in condition for allowance.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

Since the remaining patents cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject claims, but merely to show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, he is invited to telephone Carl T. Thomsen (Reg. No. 50,786) at (703) 205-8000.

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Amendment dated March 29, 2006
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If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

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